1: Ammar E, 1-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa



suitable clothes. Grown-up boys and girls who wear torn clothes which might expose their pudenda, are open to shame and gossip amongst other children.

With regard to clothes, it is noticed that children, up to the age of nine or ten, usually wear a one-piece garment called a gallabiah, with a head-cap (takia) for boys, and a coloured head-cloth for girls (mudawaria). Children do not dress like their fathers or mothers, who wear two-piece garments at least, always with a black over-garment, especially when they go out of the house for a gathering or a visit. Yet after about the age of ten, both boys and girls tend to approximate their parents in their dress, with the exception of the black over-garment. Boys, for example, wear pants under their gallabiahs, while the girls wear two gallabiahs when they are outside the house.

The fact that the children after weaning receive a decreasing amount of care and attention is a contributory factor to the high death-rate of children. In Silwa, as judged from the health centre records during the last three years, the highest mortality figure is for the children between two and five years old. For the country as a whole, the birth-rate ranks among the highest in the world.[1] For the years between 1939 and 1943 the birth-rate per thousand in the population was 42·2, 41·6, 40·8, 38·2, 39·6 respectively. The following table shows the death-rate according to different age groups with those of less than five years giving the highest percentages.[2]

TABLE II

Death-rate according to different age-groups

| *Age* | 1942 % | 1943 % | 1944 % | 1945 % | 1946 % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| less than one year | 22·22 | 22·33 | 23·40 | 23·50 | 23·20 |
| from 1–4 years | 28·20 | 25·0 | 26·81 | 25·30 | 25·80 |
| „ 5–9 „ | 3·90 | 3·84 | 3·92 | 6·04 | 3·34 |
| „ 10–19 „ | 3·66 | 3·84 | 4·06 | 4·22 | 4·43 |
| „ 20–29 „ | 3·94 | 4·23 | 3·98 | 4·06 | 4·25 |
| „ 30–39 „ | 5·05 | 5·51 | 5·09 | 5·02 | 5·37 |
| „ 40–49 „ | 4·84 | 5·38 | 4·93 | 4·79 | 5·18 |
| „ 50–59 „ | 4·50 | 5·06 | 4·68 | 4·55 | 4·86 |
| „ 60–69 „ | 4·87 | 5·48 | 5·05 | 4·85 | 5·26 |
| „ 70–79 „ | 5·11 | 5·64 | 5·17 | 5·00 | 5·45 |
| „ 80–89 „ | 5·34 | 5·49 | 5·15 | 4·99 | 5·29 |
| „ 90 and over | 7·90 | 7·87 | 7·18 | 7·10 | 7·06 |
| unidentified ages | 0·32 | 0·299 | 0·64 | 0·525 | 0·405 |

[1] *Statistical Year Book of the League of Nations*, 1942–4.
[2] *Pocket Census of 1948*, p. 32, from which these percentages are worked out.

1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa



where. In default of compliance or in the case of the continued absence of the child, its parents or guardian are to be notified, and are liable to fine or imprisonment.

These were the main laws governing the compulsory school in Egypt until 1948, and the village school was on a half-day basis up to that year, boys attending school in the morning, followed by the girls in the afternoon.[1] There are usually four classes in the school building and three other rooms, one for the staff and two for stores. The number of school-children during the year 1950–51 was 138 in the four classes. According to the official records the numbers of children of the compulsory school age for the last seven years were:

TABLE VI

Children of the compulsory school age in Silwa (1944–51)

| *Year* | *Total* | *Boys* | *Girls* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1944 | 154 | 77 | 87 |
| 1945 | 98 | 50 | 48 |
| 1946 | 98 | 45 | 53 |
| 1947 | 97 | 48 | 49 |
| 1948 | 131 | 60 | 71 |
| 1949 | 47 | 26 | 21 |
| 1950 | 61 | 38 | 23 |
| 1951 | 77 | 51 | 26[2] |

The school, however, has only places for 150 children of all ages, and thus there is scope for some parents to compete for appeal either to the Omda or the headmaster at the beginning of the year to exempt their children from schooling or to withdraw them on grounds of lack of space.

As to the staff, the school has between three and four teachers; two of them at present are from the village itself, and the teachers are either the products of al-Azhar, the theological University, or the Elementary Training College (four to five years' course). The main requirement for entrance to the latter at the age of fourteen is the memorization of half

[1] It is indicative of the male-female ethos that boys should attend school first, and even at present when the school is full, and the classes are mixed, the boys sit in the front, with the girls at the back of the class. This reflects the different sex norm guiding the behaviour of the villagers in comparison with mixed education in the modern Egyptian Universities where, for instance, girl students sit in the front and the male students sit behind them, yet there is no real mixing in the lecture rooms. The front rows are normally reserved for girls, and the general tendency is for the girls to keep to these rows.

[2] The number of children eligible for compulsory school in 1949, 1950 and 1951 is comparatively low because of the very high death rate amongst both children and adults between 1941 and 1943 as a result of the malaria epidemic.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt



with the sticks or *būṣ* as fuel. Here, too, are set up the household granaries.

The houses, especially the better-built ones, admirably suit the Egyptian climate. There is only one thing lacking to make them really pleasant places to live in, and that is greater cleanliness within the houses themselves and without in the streets. The salvation of the people lies in the fact that they lead essentially an outdoor life, the houses being regarded almost solely as places to sleep and cook in; otherwise the mortality would be considerably higher than it is.

FIG. 7. VIEW OVER THE HOUSE-TOPS

I know how comfortable a well-kept house of the better kind can be, having lived in one for five months. This house stood on a high mound formed by the *débris* of earlier buildings; for in Egypt, when a house has collapsed or has been pulled down, the mass of rubbish is not necessarily removed, but when it has been sufficiently levelled another house is erected on the top of it. The whole of the upper floor of this house was placed at my disposal, my apartments consisting of a small bedroom and a sitting-room. The latter had two unglazed but shuttered windows, from which I could look over the tops of the neighbouring houses and be a spectator of the varied life on the roofs. Outside the rooms was a partly covered passage, from which a glorious view of the sunsets could be obtained.

The villages are intersected by narrow lanes—in most cases they

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt



obtains for his business, probably refrained from examining the statement as to age made by the girl's parents.

The childbearing age lasts over a long period, for girls mature early, and it is a common thing in Egypt for a woman of fifty to give birth to a child. From an economic point of view it is probably an advantage that so many of the children die, for otherwise the country would soon become over-populated. What is so desirable is that those who do survive should be brought up in healthier surroundings, both moral and physical, and without the unnecessary suffering inflicted upon them by the ignorance of the mothers.

FIG. 17. YOUNG GIRL DRESSED UP TO ATTRACT A HUSBAND

In spite of the frequently indecent talk on sexual matters, there is a strict moral code, especially with regard to unmarried girls, the infringement of which often entails a terrible punishment. This seems somewhat unfair on the girls, considering the atmosphere in which they are brought up. If a girl has misconducted herself before marriage, and is discovered at marriage to be unchaste, the disgrace to her family is looked upon as such a terrible one that her own parents will often kill her, sometimes taking the unfortunate child—for she is hardly more than a child—into the desert, and there dispatching her, usually, I

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt



and from what the woman said I fear that it was syphilis from which he was suffering. Anyhow, she told me that if the father or mother suffered in this way their children were never washed at all until they were old enough to wash themselves. Two doctor friends of mine confirmed this, stating that they knew the practice to be a common one among the peasants. As for the child which was brought to me, I am glad to say that I at last persuaded the mother to wash it to a certain extent, and I gave her some medicine. This happened a few years ago, and on my visiting the same village again some time later I was glad to hear that the child was well and flourishing.

FIG. 35. FROCK AND HOOD MADE OF SACKING

The same woman had lost several children in early infancy before this particular infant was born. The child was wearing a peculiar dress, made of sacking, and with a hood in one piece with the frock (Fig. 34). The woman informed me, and I have been told the same thing by others, that this dress was put on the child to make it live. The dress must always be made out of a sack which has contained raw cotton; no other kind will do. Two such dresses were made and given to me (see Fig. 35).

On the seventh day after the birth a midwife comes and washes the child, as stated above, and also the mother. The water used

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

## SUPERSTITIONS

It is a common belief in Egypt, as, indeed, in some other countries also, that the soul can leave the body during sleep. It is therefore considered unsafe to wake anyone suddenly, for fear the soul should not have time to return to the body of the sleeper. Such awakening must be done very slowly, so as to give the soul ample time to return. I am not quite clear as to what happens if the soul does not get back in time; probably the sleeper's personality changes, or he becomes imbecile.

There is a strong belief among the peasants that the dead can appear to the living, speak with them, and issue commands. The strength of this belief can be seen in connexion with the sheikh cult, discussed in Chapter XV. There are a number of ghost stories current in the country, the ghost being usually regarded as the dead man's *'afrīt*, which, as will be seen in the following chapter, is not the soul, but a separate entity. The two following ghost stories may interest my readers, the second ghost having only just begun to ' walk ' a week or so before I arrived at the dead man's village.

The engine which controls the machinery for irrigating the fields of the rich *'omdeh* (headman) of a certain village is worked by steam, and the boiler is covered with a large sheet of iron. The steam is shut off late every evening, at about seven-thirty, and is turned on again at daybreak. To turn it on a man has to stand on the sheet of iron above the reservoir. One day the son of the assistant engineer made a mistake, saying that he had turned on the steam when he had not done so. The consequence was that more was generated than the boiler could contain, and it promptly exploded. An unfortunate man who was standing on the iron sheet was crushed against the ceiling and killed instantly. One night later a man who was sleeping in the engine-room with some of his fellow-workmen began to call out. His companions were aroused from sleep by his cries, and asked him what was the matter. He told them that he had seen the man who had been killed, and that he was wailing and crying "*Akh! akh! akh!*" ("Alas! alas! alas!"), and also had tried to poke out his (the speaker's) eyes with two of his fingers. Since this incident a great explosion is heard in the engine-room every night at twelve o'clock. The first time it was heard the guards and other people thought that there had been another accident, but, when they went to look, nothing had occurred, and the engine was not working. The

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt
Copts MR10

# THE FELLĀḤĪN OF UPPER EGYPT

Before people take up residence in a newly built house, or complete a well for a water-wheel, or use new machinery for irrigation or grinding corn, an ox or a sheep, or, if the people are poor, a fowl, must be killed on the threshold of the house, or close to the engine, or inside the well before the water-level is reached. This is done in case these spots may be haunted by *ʿafārīt*, who will trouble the owners if not first appeased by the blood of a sacrifice.

Within a year three people were killed by the irrigation machinery

FIG. 137. THE MOTHER OF THE BOY WHO WAS KILLED WAILING OUTSIDE THE ʿOMDEH'S ENGINE-HOUSE

belonging to the *ʿomdeh* of the village mentioned on p. 235 (see also Fig. 137). One, a woman, was killed not long before I arrived there, a boy was caught in the machinery and killed during my visit, and a man was killed in a similar way just after I had left. This *ʿomdeh* had made no sacrifice before using the engine, so a number of the villagers went to him and demanded that he should kill an ox on the spot. This he did, about a month after I had gone, and some of the blood of the animal was sprinkled on the engine. Apparently this has appeased the *ʿafārīt*, for I have heard of no accidents since the sacrifice was made!

There is an old Copt in that village, considerably over ninety

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

# THE FELLĀḤĪN OF UPPER EGYPT

remove it, or its *'afrīt* would for ever haunt the house. As it was a hopeless case I gave my servant a revolver and told him to shoot the dog. This he did, but he first took it away to a more distant spot.

While I was in Egypt in 1925 a poor man who came to trade in the village in which I was staying was drowned. He had gone to the Baḥr el-Yūsuf canal to perform his ablutions before his morning prayers, but the water was deeper than he thought, and he was unable to swim. No one was near at the time, it being very early in the morning. As he did not return people went down to the canal to look for him, and found his clothes on the bank. A large crowd collected, but nothing was done till early in the afternoon. The officials had been informed of the accident, but no doubt more pressing business detained them, and in any case they had to come from some distance. I went down and mixed with the crowd. The man's wife, mother, and little son were standing close to the water's edge, accompanied by numbers of sympathizers. The women were gesticulating and wailing, as they always do after a death, and were waving the blue and black handkerchiefs used on such occasions. "O my father! O camel of the house!"[1] they cried. A boat was manned by two or three men with a line, to which large fishing-hooks were attached, by means of which they hoped to hook up the body. They had been searching one portion of the canal in this way for some time, with no result, when I suggested that they should try another part, in the direction of which the current was flowing. They followed my advice, and very soon found the body. It was placed on the shore and immediately surrounded by a large crowd, which, after some time, dispersed, and then I saw the mother and wife of the dead man, one seated at the head and the other at the feet. I was strongly reminded of the ancient representations of Isis and Nephthys bewailing the dead Osiris. After this accident I was told by some of the villagers that no woman would go alone to fill her water-jar at that spot for fear of the drowned man's *'afrīt*, which would always remain in the water. It might be a good *'afrīt*, and then it would do no injury; but—who could tell?—it might be bad!

A few years ago some women in a neighbouring village had gone

[1] The camel, being a beast of burden and a means of livelihood among the peasants, typifies the breadwinner of the family.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

## ʿAFĀRIT

A few years ago some women in a neighboring village had gone to the Gizeh canal to fill their water-jars. One of them, thinking it would be pleasant to have a bathe, for the weather was very hot, took off her clothes and went right into the water, dancing about with her water-jar on her head. Suddenly she cried out and started wailing, as she felt that she was being drawn under the water. No one made any effort to save her, as they said that an *ʿafrīt* of some drowned person had caught her by her hair and was dragging her down. They believed that if one of them attempted to save her he or she would probably be caught also—and, besides, the *ʿafrīt* wanted her and must have her!

462 312 [515] 165 115

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt
Ancient Egypt MR5

# ANCIENT EGYPTIAN ANALOGIES

On p. 236 I speak of the slaying of a victim on the threshold of a new house and at the installation of a new engine or water-wheel. With this may be compared the slaying of victims—an ox and a goose—at the ceremony of laying the foundation of an ancient Egyptian temple.[1]

The unwillingness to save a drowning person mentioned on pp. 238 f. may be the last remains of an ancient belief that to be drowned was to "do the pleasure of Rē'," and that by being drowned a person was divinized, a belief to which Herodotus refers somewhat vaguely.[2] Professor Griffith wrote a very illuminating article on this subject some years ago in the *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache*,[3] and my brother, Dr A. M. Blackman, has also dealt with it at some length in his *Temple of Dendûr*.[4] It is, perhaps, to be remembered in this connexion that, according to more than one account, Osiris himself met his death by drowning.[5] Possibly the water-spirit, who apparently claimed (in the end successfully?) the foredoomed Prince,[6] is to be compared with the *'afrīt* that the modern *fellāḥīn* suppose to be claiming one who is drowning.

It is interesting to note that virtue was evidently attached to onions in ancient as it is in modern times (p. 261), for persons who took part in the procession round the walls of Memphis at the annual festival of Sokar, the funerary god of that city, had onions hung round their necks.[7] People also tied onions round their necks on the night preceding this festival.[8]

The love of listening to stories was certainly no less strong in the ancient Egyptians than it is in their descendants, as is shown by the number of folk-tales preserved to us from all periods. The existence of these stories points also to there having been professional story-tellers in antiquity as at the present day (pp. 268 ff.).[9]

[1] W. von Bissing and H. Kees, *Das Re-Heiligtum des Königs Ne-woser-re*, vol. ii (Leipzig, 1923), Pl. I, Fig. 2.
[2] ii, 90. [3] Vol. xlvi, pp. 132 ff.
[4] Cairo, 1911, pp. 82 f.
[5] A. Erman, "Ein Denkmal memphitischer Theologie," in *Sitzungsberichte der königl. preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, vol. xliii, 1911, pp. 926 ff.; J. H. Breasted, *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt*, pp. 25, 41.
[6] T. E. Peet, *Journal of Egyptian Archæology*, vol. xi, pp. 228 f.
[7] S. Sharpe, *Egyptian Inscriptions from the British Museum and Other Sources* (London, 1837–55), Part II, p. 78.
[8] H. Brugsch, *Hieroglyphisch-Demotisches Wörterbuch* (Leipzig, 1867–80), p. 295; *Thesaurus Inscriptionum Aegyptiacarum* (Leipzig, 1883–91), p. 1144; J. Duemichen, *Altaegyptische Kalenderinschriften* (Leipzig, 1866), Pl. XXVI.
[9] See A. Erman, *The Literature of the Ancient Egyptians*, p. xxix; W. Spiegelberg, *The Credibility of Herodotus' Account of Egypt*, pp. 30 f.

Barrenness, they believe, sometimes arises also from the entering in unto the mother of a woman who has weaned her child. The " cure " in this case, according to their statement, is for the barren woman to carry a rag of wool wet with the milk of a woman who has recently weaned her child.

## XXIII

## THE ḲARÎNA

THE Bedouins name this the " Heat " (*Ḥarāra*). This name is used generally for the class of diseases of the throat (the original symptom of which is difficulty in breathing) such as diphtheria (*ḵẖunnāḳ*) and convulsion and drying up of the uvula, and the like. The " prescriptions " of the " old wives " are self-contradictory in regard to its " cure." Some of them think that the correct thing is cauterisation [p. 49] of the child upon its frontal and terminal crown (*yāfūḵẖ*). The child, however, finds relief from their folly, inasmuch as there is soon set up inflammation of the brain (meningitis), of which it dies.

" And he who does not die of cautery will die of something else ;
The " prescriptions " are many but the death is one."

Others again hold to the belief in replacing the cauterisation by scarifying with a razor instead, on both sides (front and back). This is the method followed by the Bedouin. The Arabs of Mariūṭ and al-Ḥāgir instead of all these, bore two holes in the child's ears through which they pass a thread of red silk. The " old wives " have different absurd theories as to the cause of this disease in children. Some of them claim that every male child has a sister (*uḵẖt*) among the Jinn,

or from inflammation in the nerves. For that reason there are few who do not complain of it every day. As the numbers of the afflicted increase so, proportionately, do the methods of the quacks in claiming to " cure " it. One way, which I know by personal experience, is the " beating " of the temple-vein. They mean by this the " cutting " of the temple-vein [with a razor][1] because this is the place where one feels the pain more than any other. The fame of a barber in the villages depends on his skill in the " cutting " of the vein. A man, called Shurbagī, on the estate of Yūsuf Pāshā Kemāl in the district of Shubrakhīt has a monopoly of the " beating of the vein." For that reason the unfortunate from all villages make for him, pouring in to him from every quarter. He has fixed his fee for " beating the vein " at one dollar for each poor person whom this ailment has driven to him; while the rich pay according to their appearance and as they wish (for there is no way of stopping the generous). The belief in the efficacy of this " cure " for *Ṣudā'* by " cutting the temple vein " is widespread in a like degree in the small villages and large towns of Egypt. I have seen in the year [p. 62] just passed, in the Ḳaṣr al-'Ainī Hospital, more than six persons *in extremis* through loss of blood due to an " operation " of this kind, not to mention those who will have died before they could be brought in, or who fainted through heart weakness.

When the whole corporation of barbers was hostilely attacking the temple-vein, it said to them what has been said very appropriately:

" Someone else did wrong and I am tormented for your sake,
Just as if I were the forefinger of the penitent."[2]

Those who are accustomed to have recourse to cutting the vein as a " cure " for *Ṣudā'* will find in fact a temporary relief after this " operation," resulting from the dulling of sensation due to the loss of a large amount of blood by effusion; but when the blood supply returns and the patient recovers his wonted health he suffers violent pains and cruel aches once more.

[1] [For an actual photographic illustration of this " operation " see Miss Blackman, *op. cit.*., p. 214. Tr.]

[2] [When a man is sorry for some action he may bite his finger in remorse. The finger is bitten though it was not to blame. Similarly with the temple-vein. Tr.]

his having divulged the secret to me that in two days after this, the disease returned to him through imagination, just as it had left him under the same influence.

## XXXII

## "NECK PAIN" (WAG' AL-RAḲABA)

THIS means either hoarseness of the throat or diseases of the tonsils (lōzatēn). The "old wives" "cure" it in two ways. (1) They make the patient hang round his neck a huge bead of red stones, and (2) they order him to swallow a boiled hen's egg at one gulp without chewing. The harm of this latter method will appear from the story reported by the Egyptian newspapers of date 13th November, 1892, about a youth in the Daḳahlīya [Province] in whose throat the egg stuck and he died shortly after. Perhaps this will be a warning to those who are heedless and restrain them from trusting in the nonsense of the "old wives" and the absurdities of foolish individuals.

## XXXIII

## WORM EXTRACTORS (DAWWĀDA)

THESE are a community—the Ghagar and Nawar[1]—whose origin is from Syria; some say from China; and some go so far as to say that they are spread all over the world. They claim that they can "cure" children who cry too much, by extracting the worms (*dīd*) from their foreheads, pretending that this is the cause of their continual crying. Dr. Muḥammad Efendī 'Alī Duwaidār relates that a little child of his family was always crying, so the child's parents summoned

[1] [Gypsies and vagrants. See *Encyclopedia of Islam*, under, *Nūrī*. Tr.]

9: Klunzinger D-5 (1863-1875) 1878
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt



595 [83] is never felt by the Oriental; he condemns it, and knows only the natural sensual love, and the noblest and most practical, the love of a husband, often very true and deep. Among the ancient Egyptians monogamy alone seems to have been practised; on the other hand marriages between brothers and sisters were allowed.

593 To the modern Egyptians, the monogamous Copts, as well as the polygamous Mohammedans, kind-hearted and full of feeling as they are, lively family affections are not to be denied. The members of a family usually cling tenderly to each other; to them a foreign country is equivalent to misery, and a lengthy separation a misfortune. Veneration is deeply, to us as it often seems almost tyrannically, impressed upon children. In the presence of a father it would be disrespectful to smoke, to sit, and to speak more than is necessary. If [594] [264] there are guests the son does not eat with them but serves, it is only by the special desire of a guest that he joins the party. The younger brother has to behave in a similar manner towards his elder. Where circumstances permit, and 596 888 especially therefore in the country, all the members of the family up to old age inhabit a common dwelling, living in patriarchal style. The old father or mother, no longer able to work, lives with the vigorous son, and free from care awaits the end; and additional children, instead of being [842] looked on as a burden, are welcomed by parents as a blessing from Heaven, which thus bestows on them so many additional supporters. Living the simple and temperate life they do, 165 great ages are common; according to the statements of the people 90 to 100 years are no rarity, but these reports are not to be depended on, since scarcely anybody knows the day or even the year of his birth. Early marriages being the rule, [587] generations follow each other so rapidly that it is not rare for the great-great-grandfather to see his great-great-grandson.

593 The idyllic patriarchal life of union is on the whole the rule, but there are also many exceptions. Here as elsewhere there are cruel mothers, shrews, ungrateful children, brothers at deadly enmity, scolding mothers-in-law, husbands that beat their wives, wives that beat their husbands.